Meaning in Motion
The Semantics of Movement in Medieval Art

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Marian Motion: Opening the Body of the *Vierge Ouvrante*

MELISSA R. KATZ

MARY IN MOTION

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing famously defined sculpture as a static object describing a temporal event, an art form of bodies arrayed in space. The problem, as he saw it, was that real bodies exist in time as well as space, able to displace, change, and rearrange themselves at any given moment, whereas sculpted bodies must freeze a moment in time, the sculptor selecting that moment most advantageous to his work.[1] Rosalind Krauss, applying Lessing's *Laocoön* essay to the consideration of modern sculpture, presented modernism as at last having fused two separate modes of being, the spatial and the temporal, into one object.[2] Yet between the Hellenistic era and the age of abstraction, generations of sculptors sought to mediate between the active and the static, reconciling with various degrees of success the expression of motion accomplished via the depiction of motion arrested. The mimetic nature of medieval sculpture, however, makes such aspects difficult to perceive. In figurative sculpture the problem is compounded. From the artificial bodies of classical imagination—Pygmalion's *corpus simulatum*, for example—to the devotional simulacra of the medieval church, authors speak of sculptors inventing passive bodies, inert and inanimate.[3] The sculpture substitutes for the physical body, but it is an eminently manageable body: purportedly deprived of its power of motion, rendered tame and available to human scrutiny.[4]

The movable bodies of *Vierges ouvrantes*, or triptych Virgins, challenge this notion of a tamed sculptural body. Few of the devotional objects that have survived from the Middle Ages present as many complexities to the viewer as these artworks, which date to the medieval and early modern periods. Designed to resemble traditional statues of the Virgin and Child, the figures open at the center to display a second set of interior motifs within the body cavity (FIG. 1). Endowed with the capacity of motion, they challenge the presumption of the sculptural body as inert yet do not seek to imitate human movement, as would an automaton. Each sculpture consists of two states, one revealed and one concealed, resulting in an image that is always half visible, half unseen. To perceive the entire object, the viewer must move between the two states, adding elements of time and action to the visual comprehension of the figure. Their duality extends to their employment as devotional objects, straddling the juncture of rest and motion while maintaining the guise of a cult figure.

[1]
Virxe abrideira, ca. 1270s, polychromed ivory, H. 12⅜ in. (31.4 cm), closed and opened.
Spain, Allariz (Ourense), Real Monasterio de Santa Clara (photos: author)

Motion is implicit in the design of triptych Virgins and distinguishes them from otherwise identical images of the Virgin Mary, yet to date scholars have neglected this aspect of the sculptures' design. Previous scholarship has focused primarily on the compilation of catalogues of known works and formal description of surviving examples.[5] My own research expands this discussion by addressing the issues of patronage, audience, and purpose for which these unusual shape-shifting sculptures were devised, while also adding to the known corpus. It then places *Vierges ouvrantes* within the framework of the medieval concept of the body's interior, itself a dual realm comprised of nonvisible matter and an invisible soul.[6] These complex objects, with their two distinct artistic programs, invite an expansion of traditional notions of sculpture as solid, immutable form. Their hidden cores challenge our assumptions regarding surface and substance, as seemingly impermeable shells of ivory and wood are revealed as permeable membranes. The significance of this exchange is further heightened by the fact that both movement and meaning are generated within the notionally inviolate body of the Virgin Mary, Christianity's holiest woman.

Rarity as well as anomaly adds to the allure of these sculptures. Although widely dispersed across Europe—from Scandinavia north of the Arctic Circle to southern Portugal, and from western Brittany east to Lithuania—they are few in number, especially when compared to

[2]
Shrine of the Virgin, ca. 1300, polychromed oak, H. 14½ in. (36.8 cm), closed and opened. German, from the Rhine Valley. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.190.185, gift of J. P. Morgan, 1917 (photos: Metropolitan Museum of Art)

other types of Virgin and Child images.[7] The last comprehensive study of the *Vierge ouvrante*, Gudrun Radler's dissertation of 1986, published in 1990, catalogued forty-four examples.[8] My investigations have brought to light a significant number of previously unknown sculptures, raising the current count to sixty-five (not including forgeries), including the first examples to be identified in Italy, Belgium, Finland, and the Americas.[9] In date, they range from the thirteenth through the seventeenth century with a revival in the nineteenth century, indicating that, while the sculptural type never gained widespread popularity, neither did it disappear entirely from devotional use. Scholars in the United States tend to associate these sculptures with the devotional art of central Europe, thanks to the wider publication of the *Schreinmadonnen* of German-speaking lands and the presence of a splendid Westphalian figure in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (FIG. 2).[10] In fact, there were several centers of production: in France (various regions), the Holy Roman Empire (especially Prussia), and the Iberian Peninsula (especially Castilla-León). The majority of surviving *Vierges ouvrantes* are found in France, not Germany or Switzerland, and the Iberian school, though sadly neglected in scholarly literature, is of immense importance to the early history of the genre.[11]

Intriguing variations developed on both sides of the Pyrenees, with different interior motifs predominating in

each area. Nearly all *Vierges ouvrantes* found north of the Pyrenees open to reveal a single statue of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit arranged in a vertical format known as a Throne of Grace or Mercy-Seat Trinity. The majority of the Iberian examples, known in Spanish as *Vírgenes abrideras* or *Vírgenes trípticas*, enclose a series of sculpted reliefs narrating the Joys of the Virgin, or her principal Sorrow, the Passion of her son.[12] The methods of opening also differ, although the vertical split is always at the center, dividing the figure into two wings. Most sculptures open along the full body, from shoulders to feet, although a few Franco-German examples open only in the midsection, at thorax level.[13] In sixteenth-century Spain, a new form of *Virgen abridera* developed. It featured figures of the Immaculate Conception—sometimes themselves enclosed within conventional triptychs—whose bodies open at chest level to expose Eucharistic motifs (FIG. 3). In these works, the Virgin's body is opened by manipulating a pair of praying hands; the intimacy of this gesture is unmistakable, and also eerily invasive.

Before considering the motion generated within an individual sculpture, it is worth recalling other ways in which works of art move, such as from owner to owner and place to place. The range of patrons to whom this genre appealed and the variety of devotional contexts in which it was found is notable. From the moment of their emergence in the thirteenth century, *Vierges ouvrantes* were commissioned by members of the clergy, nobility, and monastic orders. By the fifteenth century, examples could be found in rural shrines, confraternity chapels, parish churches, and domestic settings, as well as castles, convents, and cathedrals.[14] This broad appeal to a variety of audiences and lack of fixed patronage attests to the ease with which such works could be adapted to suit existing devotional practices, both private and communal. The iconographic flexibility made possible by their moving parts and multiple scenes aided their incorporation into such diverse venues.

Temporal as well as physical movements are also informative and meaningful, with some sculptures hardly moving during their lifetimes, while others traveled great distances, changing hands as well as devotional roles. The ca. 1520 *Virgen Inmaculada*, likely the product of a Toledo workshop, has remained with the Augustinian nuns of that city for all five centuries of its existence, rarely seen by outsiders, and not publicly exhibited until the year 2000 (see FIGS. 3, 4).[15] By contrast, the Rhenish Shrine-Virgin in New York's Metropolitan Museum has been on display for decades, but little is known about its origins and provenance prior to 1876, when it emerged from a private collection in Aix-en-Provence and, passing through dealers in Lyon and Paris, was purchased by J. P. Morgan in 1907 (see FIG. 2).[16] Henk van Os suggests that the Metropolitan's work was originally used for private devotion in a German convent, a plausible supposition but by no means the only possibility.[17] The exquisite ivory piece in Allariz, for example, has served the devotional needs of both royal and conventual communities, and has known both stasis and movement, especially during its early years (see FIG. 1). Currently in the Real Monasterio de Santa Clara in Allariz (Ourense province), northern Spain, it was donated to the convent by its founder, Violante de Aragón (1246–1301), queen of Castile and wife of Alfonso X *el Sabio* (1221–84), and is the earliest known *Vierge ouvrante* with a secure patronage.[18] For biographical as well as stylistic reasons, the sculpture's commission quite likely predated the convent's foundation (a charter was granted in 1286, but the church was not consecrated until 1294), and it may have been commissioned decades earlier for the queen's personal use prior to her decision to bequeath it, along with all of her goods, to her burial foundation.[19]

Alfonso X and Violante de Aragón maintained an itinerant court, as was the custom in the medieval Spanish kingdoms, with no fixed residence and a formidable travel schedule, often staying at a given site for no more

than a few weeks.[20] While the small size of the *Virxe abrideira* (as it is known in the local Galician language) of doña Violante was naturally determined by the dimensions of an ivory tusk, it also made transportation easy, a desirable feature for a court in continuous motion. The dual iconography of the piece would also have been advantageous for the devotional needs of the Castilian monarchs. An easily portable sculpture that could serve as both a cult figure of the Virgin and Child and an ivory triptych would have been a welcome addition to the queen's traveling chapel.

The iconographic plurality of this small portable altarpiece suited it to numerous devotional uses. Its viewers, both lay and professed religious, could choose to focus on the serene, composed figure of the Virgin Mother who graces the sculpture's exterior, contemplating the tenderness with which her long, elegant fingers gently cup the placid infant balanced on her left knee.[21] The sculptor's attention to detail—evident in fine passages such as the twisted double cord that cinches Mary's mantle, threading underneath the cloth to emerge in two knots just beneath the sharp pleats of her veil—aided the viewer's identification with the human and humane qualities of the Virgin Mother. Yet such verisimilitude is countered by the rectilinear gap that runs across her shoulders and bisects her body, evidence of the mechanism that allows the body to swing open and disclose nine interior vignettes that narrate the Joys of the Virgin (FIG. 1). Following the Franciscan tradition, they are: the Annunciation, Nativity, and Adoration of the Magi (lower level); the discovery of the empty tomb, Ascension, and Pentecost (middle range); and the Coronation of the Virgin flanked by pairs of angels (upper level).[22]

The interior of the later *Virgen abridera* (ca. 1520) in the monastery in Toledo, by contrast, contains seven minute scenes of Christ's Passion, encouraging viewers to contemplate the sadder aspects of the Virgin's life. These are: the Agony in the Garden, Judas's Kiss/Wrath of Peter, Flagellation, Crucifixion, Christ carrying the Cross, Crowning with Thorns, and the Resurrection (see FIG. 4). Here intricacy is prized over clarity, with an abundance of details compressed within the tiny space afforded by the Virgin's opened arms. The vignettes, meticulously rendered in boxwood, continue onto the sides of the movable segments. Each is set against a field of iridescent feathers from exotic birds, creating a striking yet confusing visual field.

A distinctive feature of the Toledo *Virgen abridera* is its enclosure within a shallow tabernacle that closes to shield the work and opens to display it. The outside of the box is undecorated, but the interior of the shutters are adorned with carved reliefs, multiplying the opportunities for iconographical expression. I have located two other triptych Virgins set into similar tabernacles, from the same period and region, and all opening only at breast level, suggesting a local workshop specializing in the production of such complex works.[23] The scenes of the final week of Jesus' life set within the chest of the Toledo Virgin are balanced by the episodes from his childhood depicted on the outer wings of the tabernacle. These are the Annunciation, marriage of the Virgin, and Adoration of the Magi (left wing); and the Nativity and Adoration of the Shepherds, Circumcision, and Christ among the Doctors (right wing) (FIG. 3). A series of bas-relief attributes alluding to the Immaculate Conception complete the complex iconographic program of this piece. While the sorrowful events of Christ's Passion would be visible only at select intervals, when Mary's hands were parted to reveal the miniature reliefs hidden in her body, the joyful cycle on the outer wings and immaculate elements on the rear of the shadowbox would be on permanent view.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Schreinmadonna*, which dates from the early fourteenth century, similarly offered viewers multiple avenues for contemplation and devotion within its interior. The sculpted Seat of Mercy

[3]
Virgen abridera, ca. 1520s, polychromed wood, H. 12⅞ in. (32.3 cm) (figure), 23⅝ in. (60.0 cm) (tabernacle), closed. Spain, Toledo, Convento de la Purísima Concepción, "Las Gaitanas" (photo: author)

[4]
Virgen abridera, ca. 1520s, polychromed wood, H. 12⅞ in. (32.3 cm) (figure), 23⅝ in. (60.0 cm) (tabernacle), opened.
Spain, Toledo, Convento de la Purísima Concepción, "Las Gaitanas" (photo: author)

fixed within the central cavity is flanked by paintings of the Annunciation, Nativity, and Adoration (left wing); and the Visitation, Circumcision, and Annunciation to the Shepherds (right wing) (see FIG. 2). This well-known sculpture is one of only four triptych Virgins whose interiors combine narrative scenes and a Trinity, and one of only two whose exteriors depict the Virgin nursing the infant Jesus.[24] Thus, while it is widely cited as a representative *Vierge ouvrante*, it is in fact a rather anomalous example, and its combination of Trinitarian (Eucharistic) and Infancy (Incarnation) imagery is entirely idiosyncratic. Its unique combination of a Throne of Grace with compartmentalized scenes from the Life of the Virgin may represent a stage in the shift from narrative to Trinitary interiors north of the Pyrenees.

As I have argued elsewhere, the integration of Incarnation and Eucharistic themes features prominently in the theology of these opening figures but tends to be evoked implicitly, not overtly, as it is in the Metropolitan's piece.[25] The interior wings of most Trinitarian *Vierges ouvrantes* depict either a pair of angels flanking God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or an Annunciation pairing the Virgin Mary and the archangel Gabriel. Apart from their iconographical complexities—fostered by their dual motifs and doubled surface area, interior and exterior—*Vierge ouvrante* sculptures adhere to the conventions and expectations regarding the devotional art of their geographical region and time period. The composition of the interior scenes and the manner in which they are depicted are unremarkable, and the Virgin and Child sculptures that enclose them employ the same design criteria as non-opening figures. The artists who produced these striking works (all anonymous at present) employed much structural ingenuity but did not undertake stylistic innovations. Their mastery of the mechanical challenges of constructing three-dimensional sculpture with moving parts, however, is sufficient cause for admiration.[26]

THE BODY AS CONTAINER

Uncommon as they are, *Vierges ouvrantes* are not without their counterparts in the sphere of devotional art. Among their parallels are various containers of the sacred, both actual and conceptual, that similarly enclose and disclose hallowed subject matter. A series of analogous objects, when compared to triptych Virgins, enhances our understanding of the theological and theoretical implications of a sculpted body of the Virgin fashioned with a set of doors. This in turn illuminates the dialectic established between the sculpture's exterior and interior, two spaces mediated by the gesture of opening and closing the image, a paraliturgical movement that approximates, for the person effecting the transformation, the passage between the mundane realm and the divine, crossing thresholds of augmented sanctity.

The precedent that immediately comes to mind is the reliquary—or more precisely, the anthropomorphic (full-body) or speaking (body-part) reliquary—whose interior contains its own secret substance, frequently of bodily origin, and whose exterior mimics the form of the human body or the relevant body part. Furthermore, the scarcity of Marian relics, due to belief in her bodily assumption, impeded the acquisition of corporeal fragments, allowing traditional cult figures of the Virgin Mary to function as quasi-relics and, in many cases, also as reliquaries. The earliest free-standing cult image of the Virgin and Child known to us, the sculpture made around 946 for the cathedral of Clermont-Ferrand, held secondary relics of the Virgin Mary,[27] as did the *Maiestas* at Vézelay, whose survival of the great fire that consumed the church led to the rediscovery in December 1165 of the relics secreted within the enthroned Virgin.[28] Ironically, the erroneous belief that triptych Virgins first appeared in the twelfth century, rather than the thirteenth, is due to Viollet-le-Duc having described the Vézelay sculpture as an *image ouvrante* instead of a *Vierge reliquaire*.[29]

Philip II of Spain classified the *Virgen abridera* in his collection not as a religious image but as a holy relic, displaying it in the center of one of the two sixteen-foot-tall reliquary altars that flanked the high altar of the basilica in his palace/monastery complex, El Escorial.[30] No actual bone fragments or secondary relics were concealed within the sculpture, which opened at breast level to reveal scenes of the Passion, in the manner of the *abridera* figures of sixteenth-century Iberia. Rather, it was the triptych Virgin itself that was considered a quasi-relic, a status reinforced by the presence of interior panels that remained largely unseen yet tantalizingly present behind the clasped hands that doubled as moving doors.[31] Ironically, the enormous relic cabinet where the Virgin was kept, along with the two hundred principal relics of Philip II's nearly 7,500-piece collection, was itself concealed behind a pair of tall arched doors painted with an Annunciation scene, the motif most commonly depicted on the opened wings that flank the Trinity interiors.[32]

Vierge ouvrante sculptures have also been compared to Eucharistic tabernacles, another type of liturgical device capable of being opened and closed that demarcates the boundaries of the sacred by reserving the host from sight until required. Caroline Walker Bynum responded to this aspect of triptych Virgins, describing them as images that underlined the notion of Mary as container—womb, tabernacle, reliquary—for the body of God.[33] Some scholars have speculated that *Vierges ouvrantes* may have been used to physically store reliquaries and wafers, though, given the absence of compartments specifically designed to hold relics or pyxes, this remains a hypothesis.[34] Furthermore, in Spain an independent form of Marian sculpture was devised specifically to hold consecrated hosts. Via specially incorporated chambers accessed by (single) doors in the Virgin's side, back, or chest, these tabernacle Virgins fulfill literally the task that the triptych Virgins perform metaphorically (FIG. 5).[35]

The carved bodies of *Vierge ouvrante* images are physical manifestations of a broader tradition of symbolic Mariology. A praise hymn composed around 1236–46 by Gonzalo de Berceo makes the link explicit, declaring Mary to be a reliquary filled with sanctity, through whose mercy we gain salvation:

Madre, tú eres dicha — fuente de pïadat,
tú fust reliquïario — pleno de sanctidat;
la tu merced espera — toda la christiandat,
ca por ti, como cree, — ganará salvedat.[36]

Each sculpture is an eloquent and concise expression of the Incarnation, the fundamental doctrine of Christian belief in which body of the Virgin became the vehicle by which the divine force penetrated the human realm. Devotionally, sculpture, reliquary, and tabernacle all focus on the sanctity of the interior. In the case of the opening Virgins, the metaphoric and physiological centers coincide with the womb, site of her divine exaltation. Rather than simply shelter a precious commodity, as is the case in the tabernacle storehouse, the *Vierge ouvrante* indicates to the viewer the nature and meaning of its holy core, even when the interior is not visible.

Another significant difference between *Vierge ouvrante* sculptures and other cabinetlike devices is that both the exterior and the interior of opening Virgins have equal status as aids to worship. With the reliquary and Eucharistic tabernacle there is no such equivalency—the container, however elaborate in form or costly in materials, is always subservient to the relic or wafer as an article of devotion. A tabernacle may be adorned with an image or *chi-rho* monogram to indicate the presence within, but in the absence of the wafer has no real value. And while reliquaries could become important icons of civic pride and generators of piety, they could only fulfill this role through the presence of the relic, without which the reliquary becomes a mere *objet d'art*. Whether displayed closed or open, the triptych Virgin

[5]
Pere Morell, *Nostra Dona del Sagrario*, late fourteenth century (pre-1394), polychromed wood, H. 78¾ in. (200 cm), closed and opened. Spain, Balearic Islands, Palma de Mallorca, cathedral (photos: author)

remained an effective cult image as well as a valuable devotional tool.

Another container closely associated with the body of the Virgin is the church building itself. The typology draws upon patristic exegesis, promulgated by Ambrose of Milan (340–97) and his successors, that equated the Virgin Mary with Ecclesia, the mystical body of the church. Through this metaphoric alliance, the bodies of the faithful, the individual components that formed the Christian fellowship, became united in the common symbol of the Virgin's body.[37] Ambrose's phraseology—"sed uirgo, quia est ecclesiae typus, quae est inmaculata"—highlights the close parallel drawn between the physical and symbolic entities, and plays on the dual meaning of *typus* as both a type and a model, used for an architectural model (Ecclesia) as well as a model person (Maria).[38] Twelfth-century commentators on the Song of Songs extended the patristic metaphor to associate the Virgin Mary with the Bride of Solomon's canticle, interpreting the text as an allegory of Christ's love for his Church, embodied through his union with Mary as Mother-Bride-Ecclesia.[39]

The renewed interest in the literary *topos* of Mary as Mater Ecclesia coincided with the appearance of images of the Virgin in the decorative programs of churches and cathedrals, in prominent locations such as the trumeau and tympanum. This, along with the dedication of major urban cathedrals to Saint Mary, further cemented the bond between person and persona, type and prototype.[40] As one moved across the threshold of a church, beneath the watchful eyes of the Marian image on its doorway, into the structure bearing her name, visual and kinetic experience joined to reinforce the association of the physical body of the Virgin, the physical edifice of the church building, and the symbolic embodiment of faith they represented. The church interior also took on Marian connotations. The basilica was likened to Mary's body, the host guarded on the altar as Christ in her womb, the congregation gathered in the nave as the faithful embodied in Mater Ecclesia.

Similar parallels can be drawn with *Vierge ouvrante* sculptures, whose aspect when closed—i.e., the figure of the Virgin Mary—can be likened to the exterior of the building where such images were installed, and whose opened appearance can be likened to the interior of the church, where Mary was symbolically present. The fact that Mary's head remains intact above the opened triptych makes this presence all the more palpable.[41] Design reinforces this metaphor: the architectural floor plan—with the apse as its head, transept arms, and torso nave—appears anthropomorphic, whereas the sculpture, with its doors, hinges, posts, and fasteners, appears architectonic. A number of *Schreinmadonnen* from the former states of the Teutonic Order feature an iconographic variation that further conflates Mary's role as mother of Christ and mother of his Church. This subgroup merges these elements by depicting worshipers sheltered beneath Mary's arms on the two wings flanking the image of the central Trinity (FIG. 6).[42] These ten sculptures feature not only double motifs—combining a *Schreinmadonna* and a *Schutzmantelmadonna*, or Madonna of Mercy (*Misericordia*)—but also doubled bodies, as Mary's anatomy is represented on both the opened and closed figures. The doubled arms are usually sculpted, and the supplicants rendered in paint on the wings of the opened figures; among the faithful shown kneeling within the sculpture originally in Elbing, Prussia (now Elbląg, Poland) are a pope, bishop, members of royalty and of religious orders, and two enrobed masters of the Teutonic Knights (see FIG. 6).[43]

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

The resemblance of body, building, and sculpture goes further. Churches are entered and exited through sets of hinged doors, characterized as liminal thresholds between sacred and secular realms; their anatomic parallel is the birth canal, the passage by which we enter the temporal realm, and the means by which Jesus entered our world as a baby exiting the Virgin's womb.[44] One finds scenes related to the Incarnation, such as the Annunciation and the Nativity, depicted within *Vierges ouvrantes* whose interiors narrate the Seven Marian Joys. These invoke another facet of meaningful movement crucial to the experience of these sculptures, that of the body of Christ passing into and then out of the body of the Virgin. The manipulation of Mary's body, through God's agency, parallels the handling of her sculpted body by the devotee. The user moves from the initial intact figure of Virgin and Child to the scenes of the infancy gospel via an opening gesture that ushers in a narrative but causes no permanent disruption of her bodily integrity. A further iconographic resonance is established by the depiction of another joyful event, the Pentecost, in the middle tiers of the Allariz, Salamanca, and Évora figures of Iberia, signifying both the arrival of the Holy Spirit on earth and the union of the mystical body of the Church with that of Christ.[45] The customary Pentecostal

[6]
Schutzmantel-Schreinmadonna, ca. 1400, polychromed wood, H. 52 in. (132 cm), closed and opened. Luneburg, Ostpreußisches Landesmuseum, on permanent loan from the Union Evangelischer Kirchen (ex-parish church, Elbing, Teutonic States/Elbląg, Poland) (photos: courtesy Ostpreußisches Landesmuseum, Lüneburg)

imagery of Mary seated in the midst of the twelve apostles confirms her role as the nexus of physical being and spiritual essence. As Saint Ambrose had noted, both the earthly church and the womb of the Virgin Mary were filled by the Holy Spirit, making the interiors of the opened sculptures a fitting site for these Pentecostal scenes and yet another point of divine penetration.[46]

The revelation of this rich iconography by the parting of the body of Mary/Ecclesia depicted on the closed *Vierge ouvrante* reinforces the powerful relationship between the devotional image and its user. Human activation of the figure generates sculptural motion, displaying the hidden imagery and revealing its significance. The opening and closing movements performed by the viewer parallel the creative act of God the Father, transforming and changing the Virgin's body on both a physical and metaphysical level. Even those sculptures that enclose a *Gnadenstuhl* Trinity rather than narrative scenes call to mind the notion of the Virgin's body as passageway and site of creation due to the secondary role of the sculpted body as a pair of movable doors.

The association of doorways, birth, and female anatomy has ancient roots, and the biblical typology upon which the Christian analogies rest is drawn from the

prophet Ezekiel (44:1–9), whose verses on the closed doors of the inner sanctum of the Hebrew Temple were applied to the sealed body of the Virgin Mary.[47] Looking to the natural world as well as to biblical precedent, Isidore of Seville, in his early-seventh-century *Etymologies*, equated *vulva* (womb) with *valva* (a type of door), noting "the *vulva* is analogous to a folding door, *valva*—that is, the door of the belly—because it receives the semen, or because the fetus proceeds from it."[48] More to our point, *valva*, with its rich anatomical connotations, could also be used to indicate the set of double doors in medieval churches; we find it in the twelfth-century Codex Calixtinus, describing the cathedral at Compostela,[49] and in the ca. 1100 epigraph engraved across the entrance to the cloister at Conques.[50] *Valva*, no doubt, would be the Latin word most appropriate to describe the doors formed from the divided body of the triptych Virgin.

The paired doors of the church building and triptych Virgin also recall the metaphorical doors evoked by the epithets of Mary as the Open Gate (*Porta manes*, *Porta aperta*) or Gate of Heaven (*Pervia caeli...*, *Porta celli*, *Janua coeli*, etc.).[51] In the *Alma Redemptoris*, the nightly antiphon of the Advent season sung since the eleventh century, the chanter implores Mary, the "loving mother of the Redeemer, open door, gate of heaven," to "assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again."[52] The heavenly gate appears beside Mary's head as one of several attributes of the Immaculate Conception that surround the triptych Virgin belonging to the convent of the Purísima Concepción in Toledo, Spain (see **FIGS. 3, 4**).[53] Prior to its adoption as an Immaculist symbol, the concept of Mary as the open door led to the strategic placement of figures of the Virgin and Child above the entrances to walled towns. These images—typically icons in Byzantium, sculptures or paintings in the West—invoked the protective aura of the Virgin as gatekeeper while bearing permanent witness to her patronage. When coupled with warfare, such gestures held added importance. During the centuries of the Spanish *Reconquista* and crusades to the Holy Land, for example, the installation of Marian images above the doors of the principal mosques of defeated Muslim cities formed part of the Christian rites of conquest.[54]

The notion of Mary as door, threshold, sanctuary, and sacred container perhaps finds its ultimate fulfillment in the long-standing equation of Mary as *Foederis arca*, the Ark of the Covenant. In Christian typology, Mary's sealed body was frequently equated to the biblical ark and its successor, the Holy of Holies in the Hebrew Temple, spaces whose invisible cores were analogous to the child Jesus unseen in her womb. Each defined a locus of utmost sanctity and restricted access; only Levites carried the Ark of the Covenant, and only the high priest could enter the Sancta Sanctorum, on one day a year. The earliest comparisons of Mary to the Ark of the Tabernacle are found in the writings of Proclus of Constantinople (d. ca. 446), who hailed her as "an Ark gilded both within and without," consciously evoking the passage from Exodus 37:1 that describes Bezalel, chief architect of the Tabernacle, crafting an ark of *setim* wood overlaid with purest gold, both outside and within.[55]

This metaphor remained current throughout the Middle Ages: the Ark of the Covenant appears on the lintel of the left (north) tympanum (ca. 1220) on the west facade of the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. Situated in the center of the lower lintel, the ark rests beneath a trefoil arch nearly identical to the one that crowns the figure of the Virgin on the trumeau directly below it, and along an axis that moves from trumeau to ark, to bier in the Dormition scene on the upper lintel, to the coronation of the Virgin at the tympanum's peak.[56] The literary tradition was equally long-lived. A vernacular sermon from fifteenth-century Castile refers to Christ as an unborn treasure enclosed for nine months in the ark of the Virgin Mary, and likens the adornment of both the

[7]
Nuestra Señora de la Consolación, ca. 1520s, polychromed wood, H. 21⅝ in. (55.0 cm), side view, opened. Spain, Pie de Concha (Cantabria), parish church (ex-Ermita de Nuestra Señora de Consolación) (photo: author)

exterior and interior of the ark to Mary's being full of the grace of the Lord both externally and internally.[57]

Vierge ouvrante sculptures, with their dual planes of iconography, could very well be viewed as a visual metaphor of Mary full of grace both without and within. The bas-relief scenes of Mary's Joys and Jesus' passion enclosed within the narrative Virgins of France, Switzerland, and the Iberian Peninsula enumerate and illustrate individual episodes of divine grace, while their Trinitarian counterparts supply a didactic representation of her internal grace.[58] Both types represent a body doubly adorned and semiconcealed. However, whereas the high priest saw the interior of the Holy of Holies one day a year, no one—not even the high priest—was ever allowed to see the interior of the Ark of the Covenant. The visibility of the Virgin's sculpted interior stands in contrast to this notion. Despite the numerous epithets that extol the Virgin as a portal or means of access, Mary's body, the temple of her undefiled virginity, is just as often characterized as a sealed body.

The same sources used to affirm Mary's openness—Solomon's *Canticles*, the book of Ezekiel, and the exegesis of Saint Ambrose—were also drawn upon to assert her impenetrability. The fountain and garden in the Song of Songs that characterized Mary as an earthly paradise became sealed like the chamber that guarded Ezekiel's ark, and the Virgin became, in the words of Ambrose, "the great door that was closed to all and did not open, [which] Christ passed through without opening."[59] Latin hymnody abounds with devotional epithets that emphasize permanent closure. A twelfth-century hymn from the feast of the Virgin's birth praises Mary as a sealed fountain, walled garden, and closed gate:

> Haec est ille fons signatus,
> Hortus clausus, fecundatus
> Virtutum seminibus.
>
> Haec est illa porta clausa,
> Quam latente Deus causa
> Clauserat hominibus.[60]

Similarly, the Immaculate Virgin in the Toledo triptych is encircled by attributes that characterize her both as a means of ingress (*porta coeli* and *civitas Dei*) and as an impassable barrier (*fons signatus*, *hortus conclusus*, and *turris Davidis*) (see FIG. 3).

The rhetoric of enclosure accords well with the state of perpetual virginity, whereas the perforated bodies of the *Vierge ouvrante* appear to contradict it. Like the inaccessible interior of the sacred ark, Mary's inner body is intended as a space for mental contemplation, not visual inspection. To equip a body said to be unpenetrated and impenetrable with a set of doors seems paradoxical, but such incongruities abound in the Marian paradigms of virgin/mother, mother/bride, open gate/closed door. The aura of the *Vierge ouvrante* as both a visual artifact and devotional object derives from such dualities. The essence of the sculpture lies in its permeable body, whose inside is open to our inspection, and the import of the interior imagery is enhanced by its enclosure within the outer figure. Novelty is a factor, and the opened triptych Virgin may be more intriguing than the conventional cult figure, but it cannot be said to be more praiseworthy than the sedate Virgin and Child on its exterior. Indeed, part of the challenge of triptych Virgins is to reconcile the equivalent, and hence ambivalent, status of its interior and exterior aspects, just as one must reconcile the notion of Mary's intact purity with the rupture of the bodily carapace to expose the inner sanctum.

On one level, the opened *Vierge ouvrante* need not be seen as an assault on the notion of permanent virginity but rather as an apt metaphor for the Marian body. Within the interior of the triptych Virgin we find not the corrupting material of human existence, as in anatomical models or other visualizations of the human body, but rather the story of salvation mapped onto the structure of a woman of infinite purity, freed from sin and common decay. This erasure of the natural order underlines the noncorporeal character of these opening figures, which deny the body as much as emulate it (see FIG. 7). While their external appearance might invoke the human form, these are not mimetic bodies, but rather anti-bodies whose ability to open and close only emphasizes the disparity between them and their organic counterparts.[61]

MOTION AND RECEPTION

What then did the faithful experience upon opening one of these figures, to encounter not the fruitful womb of the Virgin Mary, but a narrative chamber or visualization of the divine? The rituals and devotional practices associated with triptych Virgins are difficult to reconstruct, given the lack of documentation and the removal of many images from their original settings. In addition, no written account survives regarding medieval customs or attitudes toward these figures. Information from the modern era, however, proves helpful in reconstructing the ritual behavior surrounding these figures. One such source is an account written by a seventeenth-century nun at the abbey of Maubuisson, identified only as Sœur Candide, concerning the ca. 1400 *Vierge ouvrante* known as Notre-Dame-la-Royale. The passage, incorporated within a lengthy commentary on life in the abbey, describes the author's sensations upon seeing the *Vierge ouvrante* opened to display its narrative interior:

> Quand elle estoit ainsi ouverte, ce n'estoit une Vierge, mais un monde et plus qu'un monde, puisque le paradis, le purgatoire, l'enfer y estoient avec tous les mystères du vieux et du nouveau Testament, depuis la création du monde jusqu'au jugement universel, et tout cela représenté en figures en bosse grandes comme un doigt au plus, arrangées sur des tablettes qui faisoient les séparations de lieux, et d'hystoires si différentes, le tout le mieux fait et le plus joly du monde.[62]

The account is especially valuable, as the interior of the figure was refurbished in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, with *carton-pierre* casts of saints replacing the original tableaux. The iconographical range of the now-lost vignettes is surprising. None of the authentic *Vierges ouvrantes* depicts scenes from the Old Testament, although the *Virgen abridera* of Pie de Concha, Spain, has been incorrectly described as containing a scene of Jonah and the Whale (FIG. 8).[63] A scene of Jesus'

descent into limbo may account for Sœur Candide's citing depictions of purgatory and hell in the Maubuisson Virgin; such vignettes, indicated by a hell mouth, are found in three Spanish narrative figures—Pie de Concha, ex-coll. Conde de las Almenas, and ex-coll. Conde de Belloch—and two Breton figures in France, Notre-Dame de Quelven in Guern and Notre-Dame-du-Mur in Morlaix.[64] The Morlaix scene, painted at the bottom of the right wing, depicts the harrowing of hell via a devil-infested cityscape rather than a hell mouth.[65] The Guern figure also depicts the Resurrection of the Dead, which might indicate the type of imagery Sœur Candide would describe as a Last Judgment scene.

Sœur Candide's *Relation* of abbey life was prepared for a reforming abbess, Marie des Anges (born Marie Suireau), whose tenure spanned the second quarter of the seventeenth century.[66] Mère des Anges does not appear to have been fond of the strange, over-life-size opening Virgin that was installed behind the abbey's main altar, and Sœur Candide's esteem for the *Vierge ouvrante* may have played a part in convincing her to spare the figure, if not its interior, from her housecleaning activities. Certainly the author's enthusiasm for the sculpture is palpable, and while her testimony was written (according to her own reckoning) two hundred years after the piece was commissioned, it does suggest the emotional response a late medieval viewer might have felt upon seeing the opening of a *Vierge ouvrante*.[67] Most striking is her account of how the moving of the image from one state to the other, apart from producing pleasure, results in the erasure of the original figure—no longer is it a Virgin, she writes, but a miniature universe. In transforming from a Virgin and Child into a portal to paradise, the sculpture has lost its bodily integrity.

Fortunately, most *Virgenes abrideras* on the Iberian Peninsula are still in active cult use, resulting in a collective memory (whether tenuous or accurate) of cult practices and traditions.[68] North of the Pyrenees the situation is mixed, with many works currently in museums and even those in church settings no longer in their original locations.[69] This creates an interesting dichotomy. Religious custodians tend to store the figures closed, as was likely the case in the pre-modern era, with triptych Virgins opened only for feast days and liturgical occasions. In museums and temporary exhibitions, however, the figures are always displayed opened. Our secular method of display inverts the proper order and deprives these sculptures of their greatest power, the ability to transform, surprise, and amaze. It also renders static a sculpture whose distinction as a devotional object was its capacity to move. Moreover, it eliminates the component of change, a key element of the *Vierge ouvrante*, whose transition from one state to another becomes an act of revelation, moving the viewer as much as the sculpture to a heightened level of devotion and mystical potential.

This is a transformation that can never take place without human participation; there is no clockwork mechanism in the figure, nor any apparatus to substitute or disguise the need for physical manipulation. If, as Sœur Candide describes, by opening the triptych figure one transcends the mundane world to encounter the divine, then the sculpture, through its ability to move, becomes the means of spiritual enlightenment and itself constitutes a liminal passageway between the natural and supernatural realms.[70] The worshipper, who initiates the process, also experiences a shift from outer to inner meaning. Significantly, it is an interactive process that joins the devotee and the Virgin Mother (through her image) in a revelatory act achieved through movement, change, and exchange. Together, they share the process of disclosure and discovery, gaining access to, in the majority of *Vierges ouvrantes*, the three persons of the Trinity represented in a single sculpture or, in the Iberian *Virgenes abrideras*, the anatomy of salvation spelled out across the body's interior. Regardless of the internal motif, the sculpture is always the medium of these

interactive processes of change and exchange, and the worshipper/operator its agent.

Historically, it appears that the wonders of the interior cavities also remained unseen throughout most of the year, certainly recalled and anticipated by the faithful but not available to view, save as an act of memory. Such was the case of Our Lady of Boulton, an image kept on an altar in the north transept of Durham Cathedral. The sculpture does not survive, but this account of it does, written in 1593 to record cathedral customs prior to the Reformation:

> And every principall daie the said immage was opened, that every man might se pictured within her the Father, the Sone, and the Holy Ghost, most curiouslye and fynely gilted.[71]

This reference to the image being opened on principal major feast days indicates its incorporation into the liturgical calendar, and usage comparable to that of a traditional triptych altarpiece. The sculpture was also integrated into an extant Easter ritual in which an image of Christ—the Throne of Grace's crucifix in the case of the Durham sculpture—was removed on Good Friday, given symbolic burial, and returned to its rightful place on the morning of the Resurrection:

> And within the said immage was wrowght and pictured the immage of our Saviour, merveylouse fynlie gilted, houldinge uppe his handes, and holding betwixt his handes a fair large Crucifix of Christ, all of gold, the which crucifix was to be taiken fourthe every Good Fridaie, and every man did crepe unto it that was in the church at that day. And ther after yt was honng upe againe within the said immage.[72]

This use reflects more elaborate ceremonies—life-sized figures of Christ equipped with articulated arms were employed to facilitate interment in simulated tombs—but in most churches a simple crucifix was used.[73]

Scholars have long pointed to this ceremony as important evidence of ritual behavior developed around *Vierge ouvrante* sculptures, without questioning why the monks at Durham chose to use the cross from Our Lady of Boulton's *Gnadenstuhl* (evidently detachable from the hands of God the Father) in this well-established and widespread rite.[74] Its relevance to the Easter ceremony lay in the fact that in its habitual location within the closed Virgin and Child the crucifix could not have been seen, and thus met the criterion that a Lenten cross remain invisible from the first Sunday of Lent until its unveiling on Good Friday. Traditionally, this was achieved by concealing church decorations, including crucifixes, beneath sheets of cloth to mark the solemnity of the season, invoking, according to Durandus, both Jesus' shroud and the veil of the Holy of Holies in the Hebrew Temple.[75] The *Vierge ouvrante* sculpture itself was tangential to the ceremony, not even receiving mention in the description of the Triduum observance in the Rites of Durham—employed not for its Marian associations nor the novelty of its moving parts, but rather as the sculptural equivalent of the drapery used to camouflage free-standing crucifixes.[76] Yet in doing so it highlights another aspect of the Virgin's somatic bond to her son, as her cabinet-body performs the role of a winding sheet shrouding an adult corpus rather than a womb enfleshing a divine fetus.

This clarification of the role of Our Lady of Boulton in the Holy Week liturgy encourages a more nuanced appreciation of its use in the Easter ritual but also raises the question of whether it is truly representative of the liturgical, devotional, and paraliturgical uses of *Vierges ouvrantes* in general, underlining the difficulty of reconstructing such a history from a series of disparate and isolated examples. The ritual burial of the Durham crucifix, on the other hand, reinforces the many ways in which triptych Virgins could be adapted to fit established rites and practices developed for conventional artworks and images. The incorporation of sculptures into liturgical processions, the allocation of Marian titles and feasts,

[8]
Nuestra Señora de la Consolación, ca. 1520s, polychromed wood, H. 21 5/8 in. (55.0 cm), closed and open.
Spain, Pie de Concha (Cantabria), parish church (ex-Ermita de Nuestra Señora de Consolación) (photos: author)

and the accrual of miracles and legends of acheiropoietic origins are other indications of how *Vierges ouvrantes* could assume the role of traditional cult figures and be venerated in ways that ignored their unusual construction. But was the reverse true? Were there ritual practices that exploited the unique opportunities presented by a movable image?

Once again, no documentation survives from the medieval period, but evidence of early modern practices can be found in the Maubuisson *Relation*, from the second quarter of the seventeenth century, which tells of an apparently long-standing tradition of the sculpture being opened in times of drought in order to beseech Mary's aid in procuring rain.[77] The eighteenth-century historian Pihan de la Forest attributed the survival of the Maubuisson *Vierge ouvrante* during the mid-seventeenth-century reform to the fondness of the abbey's Bernardine confessors for antiquities and the dependence of the Cistercian *sœurs* on the opening ritual to avert calamity.[78] Similarly, the Virgin at Anost presided over a childbirth cult, in which expectant mothers would bring clothing intended for the future newborns for the priest to touch to the open sculpture.[79] With regard to the Iberian corpus, oral tradition records communities employing

[9]
Virxe abrideira, Allariz, Real Monasterio de Santa Clara, detail of upper half, three-quarter view (photo: author)

similar nonliturgical practices in times of extreme need. In Cantabria, where flooding rather than drought was a frequent threat, the residents of Pie de Concha would seek divine intervention by offering prayers and Masses to their triptych Virgin, who also aided in difficult childbirths (FIG. 8). The image, housed until recently in a sanctuary bearing her name, was normally displayed closed, as a conventional religious effigy, and was only opened infrequently as a means of activating or heightening the intercessory powers of the image.[80]

In the case of the Maubuisson, Anost, and Pie de Concha Virgins, the revelation of the interior imagery corresponds not to the cyclical timing of the liturgical calendar but rather to the random timing of rogative processions, linked not to specific feasts but to moments of shared or individual crisis within the community that the Virgin serves and protects. The supernatural was invoked by opening the image rather than by carrying it in procession.[81] Vision often plays a key role in activating divine intercession: the sculpture's visibility is enhanced not by bringing it out into the community in procession, but by revealing to the community imagery that would not ordinarily be seen. Significantly, in both cases, movement triggers intercessory power; faith is set in motion

[10]
Nuestra Señora de la Consolación. Pie de Concha, parish church.
Detail of evangelist in niche flanking lower left wing
(photo: author)

[11]
Virgen abridera. Toledo, Convento de las Gaitanas.
Detail of Agony in the Garden on side edge of left wing
(photo: author)

by the public's ability to move the figure.[82] Movement and human interaction with the cult figure are again critical to the process; neither the image nor the devout remain passive during the encounter.

It has not been possible to determine who was able to handle triptych Virgins, whether access was limited by ecclesiastic status, or whether such actions were performed in public or private. Despite the lack of historical sources, the objects themselves provide important evidence. In the twenty authentic narrative Virgins (those whose interior motifs feature a series of images rather than a single sculptural group) found in Spain, Portugal, France, and Switzerland, the sculptural facture extends around the wings to include the sides flanking each wing. This treatment can range from the decorative piercings found on the Allariz ivory (FIG. 9), which facilitate a glimpse of the interior scenes as the work is being opened, to the provision of sculptural elements inserted in side niches, as seen in the *Vírgenes abrideras* of Pie de Concha and Toledo (FIGS. 10, 11).

Such design features suggest an acute degree of attention to the visual impact of the moving sculpture, as well as an acknowledgment that the sculpture exists not just in an open and a closed state, but also in the intermediate state of a figure in motion. Of course, the thin shells of the Trinitarian Virgins do not allow for such side embellishments and so bear no internal evidence of how they might have been employed. It is also worth noting that the dozen or so forged *Vierges ouvrantes*—which curiously all seem to be of the "primitive" narrative type—do not feature any such articulation of the side edges; their carvers obviously overlooked this small but informative detail (FIG. 12).[83] This points to the distinction between designs that were formulated for active devotional use and those conceived solely on an artistic basis for sale to nineteenth-century collectors.

While the wing facture suggests that the medieval and early modern sculptors wished to enhance the effect of the moving sculpture, it provides no evidence as to who was privileged to view this motion. We still do not know whether *Vierges ouvrantes* were opened in front of a group of awed witnesses or maneuvered in private for others to encounter later in a transformed state. Each method would be equally powerful, exploiting either the element of surprise or the drama of public performance to inspire awe and a heightened sense of wonder. Anthropological models confirm the power of diminishing access to the divine, by excluding communities from transformative rituals, as a means of enhancing sacrality; they also demonstrate the efficacy of privileged viewing, when witnesses are allowed to be present at sacred unveilings.[84] In the medieval Mass, the celebration of the Eucharist contained elements that partook of both strategies. The emphasis, following the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, on viewing the moment of transubstantiation was balanced by the infrequency (save for priests) of ingesting the consecrated wafer.[85] Here access and exclusion both contribute to the enhancement of the sacramental value of the ritual.

Without knowing the customs used in the veneration of *Vierges ouvrantes*, compelling arguments can be made for either public or private "unveiling." Indeed, it is also possible that both methods were employed, according to ritual needs and/or local customs. Even when removed from ritual context and seemingly at rest, triptych Virgins remain actively engaged with issues of access and vision. Whether on stationary display in an exhibition or at stasis between intervals of devotional use, the figure places limits on its visibility. Presented with either a closed cult figure of the Virgin or an exposed interior of a narrative motif or Trinitarian sculpture, our vision is channeled and directed. The limits on our visibility remind us of the image(s) that cannot be seen, and thus what is hidden from sight remains present in mind. By making use of sculptural tactics, *Vierges ouvrantes* focus our attention on what is unseen, rarely seen, or only partially seen, and thus reveal for contemplation what is concealed from our vision.

Until further evidence comes to light, our knowledge of *Vierge ouvrante* figures and the ways in which they were used will remain similarly limited. We can be certain only that the original audience knew that within

[12]
Vierge ouvrante, 1830s (pre-1836), ivory, H. 18 in. (45.4 cm), opened. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. LP 1143
(photo: © RMN / Droits réservés)

their particular cult figure of the Virgin and Child lay hidden a great secret, an interior sanctuary accessed via a portal disguised as the Blessed Mother. In the sacred geography of the triptych Virgin, the mundane and familiar leads to the heart of the divine mystery, manifesting the goal of image-based devotion to guide the worshiper to deepened spiritual intensity. The interplay between container and content is highly charged, as the inviolate body of the Virgin Mary is revealed as a permeable shell traversing the boundaries of an unsealed figure. Neither static objects nor frozen moments of time, *Vierges ouvrantes* expand the boundaries of sculpture beyond the categories envisioned by Lessing and Krauss, and refute the perceived limitations of three-dimensional naturalism. Drawing upon a unique set of mobile, tactile, and visual features, triptych Virgins eloquently demonstrate their ability to move the viewer by allowing—indeed, requiring—the devotee to move them.

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1 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Indianapolis, 1962), 77–79, 85–86.

2 Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (London, 1977), 3–5.

3 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, bk. 10; *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. Michael Simpson (Amherst, 2001), 170–71; and Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge, 1989), 316–37.

4 See, for example, Tom Flynn, *The Body in Three Dimensions* (New York, 1998), 13.

5 The most comprehensive study to date is Gudrun Radler, *Die Schreinmadonna "Vierge ouvrante": Von den bernhardinischen Anfängen bis zur Frauenmystik im Deutschordensland; mit beschreibendem Katalog* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990). In addition, see Jean Sarrète, *Vierges ouvertes, Vierges ouvrantes et la Vierge ouvrante de Palau-del-Vidre: Iconographie mariale* (Lézignan [Aude], 1913); Walter Fries, "Die Schreinmadonna," *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* (1928–29), 5–69; Josef Maria Ritz, "Schreinfiguren," in *Volkskundliche Gaben: John Meier zum siebzigsten Geburtstage dargebracht*, ed. Erich Seemann and Harry Schewe (Berlin and Leipzig, 1934), 168–69; Manuel Trens i Ribas, *María: Iconografía de la Virgen en el arte español* (Madrid, 1946), 481–524; Alfred A. Schmid, "Die Schreinmadonna von Cheyres," in *Lebendiges Mittelalter: Festgabe für Wolfgang Stammler* (Freiburg, 1958), 130–62; Maurice Vloberg, "Vierges ouvrantes: Caractères et classification," *Sanctuaires et pèlerinages* 30 (1963), 25–34; Christoph Baumer, "Die Schreinmadonna," *Marian Library Studies* 9 (1977), 239–72, and "Supplement," *Marian Library Studies* 10 (1978), 207–8; Corine Schleif, "Die Schreinmadonna im Diözesanmuseum zu Limburg: Ein verfemtes Bildwerk des Mittelalters," *Naussische Annalen* 95 (1984), 39–54; Théodore A. Koehler, "Vierges ouvrantes non cataloguées: Note au sujet d'une dévotion oubliée," *Marian Library Studies* 26 (1998–2000), 303–8; and Irene González Hernando, "Estudio de las vírgenes abrideras tríptico: Desarrollo en la Baja Edad Media y proyección en los siglos posteriores" (Ph.D. diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2008).

Non-monographic studies have begun to approach the genre thematically. These have been undertaken by Renate Kroos, "'Gotes tabernackel': Zu Funktion und Interpretation von Schreinmadonnen," *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 43, no. 1 (1986), 58–64; Barbara Newman, "Divinizing the Virgin: The Marian Trinity in Art," in *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2003), 254–72; Marius Rimmele, "Die Schreinmadonna: Bild–Körper–Matrix," in *Bild und Körper im Mittelalter*, ed. Kristin Marek et al. (Munich, 2006), 41–59; Elina Gertsman, "Performing Birth, Enacting Death: Unstable Bodies in Late Medieval Devotion," in *Visualizing Medieval Performance: Perspectives, Histories, Contexts*, ed. Elina Gertsman (Aldershot, U.K., and Burlington, Vermont, 2008), 83–104; and Melissa R. Katz, "Behind Closed Doors: Distributed Bodies, Hidden Interiors, and Corporeal Erasure in *Vierge ouvrante* Sculpture," *Res* 55/56 (spring–autumn 2009), 194–221.

6 This paper is drawn from my dissertation, "Interior Motives: The *Vierge ouvrante*/Triptych Virgin in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2010).

7 Curiously, the devotion does not seem to have taken hold in Italy, although Pope Pius V (r. 1566–72) once owned an opening Virgin, and other popes granted indulgences to figures housed abroad (see notes 30, 31 below). However, examples whose existence has not yet been made known to the scholarly community may indeed survive in obscure rural parishes or convents. The recent (re)-discovery of a triptych Virgin in the Valle d'Aosta region of Italy supports this hypothesis: Rosella Obert and Alina Piazza, "Notre-Dame d'Antagnod, une *Vierge Ouvrante*," *Lo Flambò* 195, no. 3 (March 2005), 64–88.

8 "Beschreibender Katalog," in Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 197–360. Radler initially catalogued forty-three examples, then added a forty-fourth in an addendum; three of these sculptures (211–20, cat. nos. 2–4) are nineteenth-century forgeries, and the authenticity of another (203–10, cat. no. 1) is highly disputed, although Radler considers it medieval.

9 For a current listing, see the addendum in Katz, "Behind Closed Doors" (note 5 above). The issue of forgeries, replicas, and homages is a thorny question and is dealt with at length in my dissertation (note 6 above).

10 See the authors listed in note 5 above.

11 In my dissertation (note 6 above), I argue that triptych Virgins originated in the kingdom of Castilla-León in the final third of the thirteenth century and only spread north of the Pyrenees around 1300. Works dating to the last quarter of the thirteenth century are found in Allariz and Salamanca (Spain), and Évora (Portugal); examples dating to the first third of the fourteenth century are in New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art), Berlin (Staatliche Museen), Eguisheim and Amiens (France), and Cheyres (Switzerland, stolen 1978). In addition, lost works probably dating from 1250–1350 are documented to have once existed in Gaià and Sigüenza (Spain), and in two Parisian collections. Despite the valiant efforts of the museum to validate the authenticity of its work, I do not accept the figure in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, as medieval. In support of the authenticity of the Baltimore *Vierge ouvrante*, see Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 203–10, and Kelly Holbert, "The Vindication of a Controversial Early Thirteenth-Century *Vierge Ouvrante* in the Walters Art Gallery," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 55/56 (1997/98), 101–21. In contra, see Richard H. Randall, Jr., "Pastiches, Revivals, Forgeries, and Open Questions," in *Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age*, ed. Peter Barnet (Detroit, 1997), 285–89; and Irene González Hernando, "Un ejemplo de Virgen abridera de la Pasión: La Virgen de Boubon y la polémica en torno a su autenticidad medieval," *Medievalia* 38 (2006), 57–64.

12 Naturally, there are exceptions: four Trinitarian Virgins are found on the Iberian Peninsula (Toldaos, Buiñondo, Gaià, and Palau-del-Vidre), while four narrative Virgins exist north of the Pyrenees, two in Brittany (Quelven/Guern and Bannalec), one in the Île-de-France (Maubuisson, stolen 1973), and one in Switzerland (Cheyres). Also, while other Spanish *Vírgenes abrideras* enclose either the Marian Joys or Passion/Sorrows, one example (Pie de Concha) incorporates scenes of both sorrowful and joyful scenes. On the examples in Palau-del-Vidre, Guern, Bannalec, Maubuisson, and Cheyres, see Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), "Beschreibender Katalog." On Palau-del-Vidre, see also Sarrète, *Vierges ouvertes* (note 5 above). On Buiñondo, see Irene González Hernando, "La Virgen de San Blas de Buriñondo en Bergara: Ejemplo y excepción de Virgen abridera trinitaria," *Anales de historia del arte* 16 (2006), 59–78.

13 Only one authentic work (Maubuisson, ca. 1400) divides at the head as well as the body, and one other (Bannelac, ca. 1600) opens below the waist, although both inspired nineteenth- and twentieth-century imitations. See the discussion in note 41 below and Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 221–23, 235–38, cat. nos. 5 and 8.

14 Radler's textual emphasis on the writings of Cistercian authors and mystical nuns has given many people the mistaken impression that most *Schreinmadonnen* were intended for convent audiences: Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 12–37. Rather, it is the breadth of the sculptures' appeal and the range of devotional settings in which they were used that is noteworthy. As Radler herself argues, while Cistercian texts shaped public understanding of triptych Virgins (and indeed all devotional objects), they were but one of the many orders whose theology influenced contemporary thought. I would note that Bernardine sermons and vernacular mysticism, while equally relevant to issues of perception and reception, played no direct part in the development of the genre or the formation of its iconography.

15 On the sculpture, see the catalogue entry by Palma Martínez-Burgos García in *Carolus*, exh. cat., ed. Fernando Checa (Madrid, 2000), 467, cat. no. 260; and Melissa R. Katz, *Herencia recibida 07*, exh. cat. (Toledo: Consejería de Cultura, Castilla-La Mancha, 2007), 140–41. On the community, see Balbina Martínez Caviro, *Conventos de Toledo: Toledo, Castilla interior* (Madrid, 1990), 376–78.

The Augustinian house is officially known as the convent of the Inmaculada Concepción de Nuestra Señora but is generally referred to as the convent of the Purísima Concepción or, more often, the convent of the Gaitanas (after its foundress). See also note 23 below.

16 On the Metropolitan Museum of Art's sculpture, see Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 271–76, cat. no. 16; and William D. Wixom, "Medieval Sculpture at the Metropolitan, 800–1400," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 62, no. 4 (2005), 46.

17 Henk W. van Os, *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe, 1300–1500*, trans. Michael Hoyle (London, 1994), 50–51, 55–56, and pl. 16. Wixom concurs: Wixom, "Medieval Sculpture" (note 16 above), 46.

18 Melissa R. Katz, "A Convent for 'la Sabia': Violante de Aragón and the Foundation of Santa Clara de Allariz," in *Culture and Society in Medieval Galicia: Local, Regional, and Cosmopolitan Communities*, ed. James D'Emilio and Michael Kulikowski (Leiden, forthcoming). The *Virxe abrideira* from Allariz most likely dates to the period prior to the war of succession occasioned by Alfonso X's lengthy decline and his marital separation from doña Violante in 1279, after which her status at court and financial means were severely curtailed. Based on the style of the Virgin's veil and robe, which Carmen Bernis dated to the 1250s, Bango Torviso suggested a date in the mid-thirteenth century: Carmen Bernis Madrazo, "La moda y las imágenes góticas de la Virgen: Claves para su fechación," *Archivo Español de Arte* 48, no. 170 (1970), 200; and Isidro Bango Torviso, "Virgen Abridera de Allariz," in *Galicia no tempo, 1991: Conferencias, otros estudios* (La Coruña, 1992), 141.

19 The queen's testament, dated 11 April 1292 (a date often mistaken as that of her death), specifies that she leaves the contents of her personal chapel, all that she has and all that she has already given, to Santa Clara de Allariz: "& mandolas toda mi capiella assi lo que les yo di commo lo que yo tengo ... & mando a este monesterio sobre dicho do me mando enterrar mio lecho & toda mi rropa"; Testament of Violante de Aragón, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Sección Clero (Regular), Legajo 4.900, fols. 5–6 (my transcription).

20 Antonio Ballesteros y Beretta, *El itinerario de Alfonso el Sabio*, vol. 1, *1252–1259* (Madrid, 1935).

21 On this figure, see Bango Torviso, "Virgen Abridera de Allariz" (note 18 above), 131–48, revising José Villaamil y Castro, "Virgen abridera de marfil conservada por las Clarisas de Allariz," *Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Excursiones* 7 (1899), 83–110.

22 The number and nature of the Marian Joys fluctuated throughout the Middle Ages, ranging from five to eighteen episodes: Franz Joseph Mone, *Hymni Latini Medii Aevi*, vol. 2, *Hymni ad B. V. Mariam* (Freiburg, 1854; repr. Bologna, 1969), 261–70. The Franciscans are credited with expanding the *Gozos* or Joys of the Virgin in medieval Iberia from five (as in Berceo's *Loores*; see note 36 below) to seven (as in Alfonso X's *Cantigas*): A. D. Deyermond, *Historia de la literatura española*, vol. 1, *La edad media* (Barcelona, 1979), 200. Certain preferences are also noted, such as the absence of the Visitation in favor of the Ascension. Juan Ruiz's *Libro de Buen Amor* of 1330 opens and closes with verse cycles of the *Gozos de Santa María*. Each lauds seven joyful events, but the selection varies. The sequence of the last of his three poems (verses 1642–49) corresponds to that of the Allariz Virgin and the Franciscan tradition.

23 One work, formerly in the Carmelite convent of Cuerva (Toledo province), was sold at auction in Madrid in 2002, and its current whereabouts are unknown; the other is in a private collection in Madrid. Both are at present unpublished. Like the sculpture from the convent of the Gaitanas, they open only at breast level to display narrative interiors of Eucharistic/Passion iconography, and when closed present an Immaculate Virgin. The iconography on the tabernacle wings varies from piece to piece, with the Gaitanas piece being the most complex. Perhaps other such works survive in cloistered settings in central Spain and will come to light in the future.

24 The only *Vierges ouvrantes* to feature a *Virgo lactans* exterior are those preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and in the Église Saint-Matthieu of Morlaix, France. They are also the only two surviving sculptures whose interiors combine (painted) narrative wings with an interior *Gnadenstuhl*, features that may be telling vestiges of the transition from narrative interiors to Trinitarian motifs. A sculpture once in the collection of the Austrian count Hans Wilczek had two Passion scenes along with two angels painted on its side wings, while a Virgin formerly in the Carmelite convent of Paris had Passion scenes. See Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 271–86, cat. nos. 16–18. Scholars have failed to note that the Carmelite sculpture, famously denounced by Gerson in 1402, contained narrative as well as Trinitarian motifs: Jean Gerson (1363–1429), *Opera Omnia*, ed. Louis Ellies Du Pin (Antwerp, 1706; repr. Hildesheim, 1987), vol. 3, col. 947.

25 This point is more fully discussed in Katz, "Behind Closed Doors" (note 5 above).

26 Technical virtuosity is demonstrated, for example, in the hinging mechanisms of the three thirteenth-century Iberian works, which are disguised within the newel posts of the Virgin's throne. In

addition, the interior and exterior motifs of the *Virxe abrideira* of Allariz—but not that of Évora—are carved from the same single ivory tusk, a fact that should be taken into account by those who judge the carver of the former as less skillful than that of the latter.

27 Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago, 1994), 300, citing Ilene H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton, 1972), 31 and 39. Forsyth reported that of the 110 early French sculptures she examined, fewer than one-third showed evidence of niches where relics could have been inserted, and only ten or so of these might have been original to the twelfth century, leading her to conclude that relics were not essential to their role as cult images: Forsyth, 38–39.

28 Hugh of Poitiers (d. 1167), "Sepulcrum B. Mariae Magdalenae flagrat. Reliquiae in imagine B. Virginis repertae," *Historia Vizeliacensis Monasterii*, bk. 4: PL 194, cols. 1659D–61A; and *The Vézelay Chronicle and Other Documents from MS. Auxerre 227 and Elsewhere*, trans. John Scott and John O. Ward (Binghamton, 1992), § 4.51, 284–85. See also Belting, *Likeness and Presence* (note 27 above), 302; Forsyth, *Throne of Wisdom* (note 27 above), 32–34; and David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, 1989), 94. As the Vézelay example indicates, relics need not have been stored in purpose-built containers nor, once in place, remain accessible. Many such examples have come to light in the course of restorations, as in the case of relics found in the heads of the Virgin and Child in the thirteenth-century *haut-relief* painting in Santa Maria Maggiore, Florence; see *L'immagine antica della Madonna col bambino di Santa Maria Maggiore: Studi e restauro*, ed. Marco Ciatti and Cecilia Frosinini (Florence, 2002). I thank Giovanni Freni for bringing this work to my attention.

29 Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné du mobilier français de l'époque Carlovingienne à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1858), vol. 1, 133–34.

30 Entrega Quarta (1584), APR caja 83, no. 1, fols. 69–70: Archivo General, Patronato de la Corona, Palacio Real, Madrid. The entry is transcribed in Julián Zarco Cuevas, *Inventario de las alhajas, pinturas y objetos de valor y curiosidad donados por Felipe II al Monasterio de El Escorial (1571–1598)* (Madrid, 1930), 212, no. 1606, but reordered to fall among the statues, whereas in the 1584 manuscript it appears among the *relicarios* and not the *figuras y quadros de relieue y medio-relieue*. Estal, however, corrects this: Juan Manuel del Estal, "Inventario de las reliquias veneradas en el Real Monasterio de El Escorial," *La Ciudad de Dios: Revista agustiniana* 212, no. 3 (1999), 756.

31 Philip II (1527–98, r. 1554–98) received the *Virgen abridera* as a gift from Pope Pius V (r. 1566–72) to mark the victory over the Ottomans in the battle of Lepanto: Gregorio de Andrés Martínez, "Historia y vicisitudes de la Virgen de S. Pío V sustraída de El Escorial durante nuestra guerra civil," *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileños* 37 (1997), 595–604.

32 Rosemarie Mulcahy, "Federico Zuccaro and Philip II: The Reliquary Altars for the Basilica of San Lorenzo de El Escorial," *Burlington Magazine* 129, no. 1013 (August 1987), 502–9. The jewel-encrusted *Virgen abridera* was stolen from the Escorial in 1936 at the start of the Spanish Civil War, and so does not appear in Mulcahy's photographs of the cabinet interiors, figs. 13 and 15.

33 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987), 268.

34 Schmid, "Die Schreinmadonna von Cheyres" (note 5 above), 131; Kroos, "'Gotes tabernackel'" (note 5 above), 61; and Norbert Wolf, *Deutsche Schnitzretabel des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2002), 298. For a dissenting view, see Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 38–43. Although some statues rest on grated bases, they do not seem to be fully accessible compartments. Olivia Lind of Patrimoine de France indicates that a small wooden plug has been detected in the throat area of the *Vierge ouvrante* of Eguisheim (Alsace-Lorraine), which could conceal a reliquary chamber, although the plug has not been removed to verify this: Patrimoine de France, Service Régional de l'inventaire Alsace, dossier IM68005726, 1994, www.patrimoine-de-france.org/oeuvres/richesses-2-563-9321-P132905-25634.html. Whether or not a relic is present, it is significant that the chamber is found not within the section of the body accessed by doors, but outside of the opening area.

35 On tabernacle Virgins, see Jerónimo Juan and Gabriel Llompart, "Las Vírgenes-Sagrario de Mallorca," *Bolletí de la Societat Arqueològica Lul·liana* 79 (1963), 177–92 and pls. 1–23; Gabriel Llompart i Moragues, "Les Maredeédeus sagraris de Mallorca," *Miscellània litúrgica catalana* 14 (2006), 61–86. Examples are also known in France.

36 "Mother, you are called the fountain of piety, / you were a reliquary filled with sanctity; / all Christendom awaits your mercy, / because, it is believed, through you one gains salvation." Gonzalo de Berceo (ca. 1195–1264), *Loores de Nuestra Señora*, verse 199; *El duelo de la virgen; los himnos; los loores de nuestra señora; los signos del Juicio Final*, Obras Completas 3, ed. Brian Dutton (London, 1975), 105. All

translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

37 See Alois Müller, *Ecclesia–Maria: Die Einheit Marias und der Kirche* (Freiburg, 1955); and Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst* (Gutersloh, 1966), vol. 4, pt. 1, 84–106.

38 "It is well that Mary is espoused and yet a virgin, for she is a symbol of the Church who is immaculate and yet married." Ambrose of Milan (340–97), *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* bk. II, 7: PL 15, col. 1555B; and *Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Opera*, pt. 4, CCSL 14, ed. Marcus Adriaen (Turnhout, 1957), 33.

39 See Ann W. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1990), for a thorough discussion of ancient and medieval exegeses. The identification of the Song of Song's Bride with the Church dates back to Origen (ca. 185–254), whose commentaries were well known in the twelfth century (Astell, 4).

40 The post-1194 substitution at Chartres Cathedral of a liturgy dedicated to the Virgin for the October 17th office commemorating the church's dedication is an example of the fusion of Mary and the edifice bearing her name: Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral: Christ, Mary, Ecclesia* (Baltimore and London, 1959; repr. New York, 1964), 60.

41 See note 13 above regarding the one exception to the rule, the Maubuisson *Vierge ouvrante*. The three French ivory forgeries (in the Louvre, Rouen, and Lyon museums) and the disputed work in the Walters Art Museum (see note 11 above) also divide from the crown of the head to the feet, leading me to believe they were modeled on the Maubuisson figure, then considered the oldest known example but now recognized as a late-fourteenth- or early-fifteenth-century sculpture (see note 67 below).

42 The ten *Schreinmadonnen* whose interiors combine *Schutzmantel* and Trinity motifs are currently located in the towns of Sejny, Poland; Misterhult and Övertorneå, Sweden; and the following museums: Kunstindustrimuseet, Copenhagen; Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg; Musée de Cluny, Paris; Muzeum Diecezjalne, Pelplin, Poland (two sculptures); Ostpreußisches Landesmuseum, Lüneburg, Germany; and the Erzbischöfliches Dom- und Diözesanmuseum, Vienna. All except the Vienna sculpture are firmly linked to the Order of Teutonic Knights; the origin of the Viennese work is unknown, but it was also likely affiliated with this military order. On these works, see Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), "Beschreibender Katalog"; and Karl-Heinz Clasen, *Die mittelalterliche Bildhauerkunst im Deutschordensland Preußen: Die Bildwerke bis zur Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1939), vol. 2, 118–31.

43 This sculpture was produced around 1400 for the chapel of the Teutonic castle in Elbing (now Elbląg, Poland) and moved after the defeat of the Order in 1454 to the Dominican convent of that city. At the time of Radler's catalogue, its location was unknown, having disappeared from Poland in 1944. When the sculpture reappeared at the end of the 1990s in a rural East German Catholic parish, ownership was transferred to the German Union of Evangelical Churches, which placed it on long-term loan to the East Prussian State Museum, Lüneburg, in 2004. Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 109–12, cat. no. 37; correspondence, M. Katz and museum curator, April 2010.

44 On liminality, see Victor W. Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, 1967), 93–111; Victor W. Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, 1969), 94–130; and Victor W. Turner, "Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas," in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, 1974), 231–71. For a medieval and gendered perspective, see Caroline Walker Bynum, "Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality," in *Anthropology and the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert L. Moore and Frank E. Reynolds (Chicago, 1984), 105–25.

45 The Pentecost appears in the center of the right wing of the Allariz and Évora figures, and in the center of the midsection in the Salamanca figure.

46 See note 37 above.

47 For further discussion, see Katz, "Behind Closed Doors" (note 5 above); on Ezekiel's exegesis, see Dorothy F. Glass, "Otage de l'historiographie: l'*Ordo prophetarum* en Italie," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 44 (2001), 263–69. I thank Nino Zchomelidse for bringing Glass's article to my attention.

48 "*Vulva* vocata quasi *valva*, id est, janua ventris, vel quod semen recipiat, vel quod ex ea fœtus procedat." Isidore of Seville (d. 636), *Etymologiarum*, XI, 1, "De homine et partibus eius," 137; see also XV, 7, "De aditibus," 4; PL 82, cols. 414A and 547B–48A (my translation). For a slightly different word order, see *The "Etymologies" of Isidore of Seville*, ed. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, Jennifer A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge, 2002), 240 (XI.i.137).

49 "[V]igenti et sex habentur pilares, duodecim ad dexteram, totidemque ad levam, quorum duo ante valvas intus positi, ciborios separant et portallos" (Twenty-six piers, twelve on the right and just as many on the left, and two placed in front of the interior doors, which separate the archways and the portals); Codex

Calixtinus (ca. 1138), bk. V, chap. IX; *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela: A Critical Edition*, vol. 2, *The Text*, trans. Paula Gerson, Annie Shaver-Crandell, and Alison Stones, with Jeanne Krochalis (London, 1998), 68–69.

50 "HAS BENEDIC VALVAS QVI / MVNDVM REX BONE SALVAS / ET NOS DE PORTIS SIMVL / OMNES ERIPE MORTIS" (Bless these doors, good King, you who save the world, and at the same time snatch us from the gates of death), Conques lintel, ca. 1095–1105; Calvin B. Kendall, *The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and Their Verse Inscriptions* (Toronto, 1998), 219, cat. no. 36; see also the Trogir (Croatia) portal of 1240, 289, cat. no. 172. I thank Professor Kendall for bringing these epigraphs to my attention.

51 Although the Litany of Loreto was not formalized until 1587, Marian litanies arose in the twelfth century and were numerous from the thirteenth century onward. See the many examples in Mone, *Hymni Latini* (note 22 above).

52 "Alma Redemptoris mater, quae pervia caeli / Porta manes et stella maris, succurre cadenti, / Surgere qui curat, populo...."; *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, ed. Clemens Blume and Guido Maria Dreves, vol. 50, *Hymnographi Latini: Lateinische Hymnendichter des Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1907; repr. New York and London, 1961), 317–18, no. 244.

53 See note 15 above.

54 Amy G. Remensnyder, "The Colonization of Sacred Architecture: The Virgin Mary, Mosques, and Temples in Medieval Spain and Early Sixteenth-Century Mexico," in *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society; Essays in Honor of Lester K. Little*, ed. Sharon Farmer and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, 2000), 189–219. On the role of icons in Byzantine warfare, see Bissera V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, 2006), esp. chap. 3, "In the Context of War," 61–103.

55 Proclus of Constantinople (ca. 390–ca. 446), "Oratio de laudibus S. Mariae," J.-P. Migne, Patrologiae graecae, vol. 65 (Paris, 1864), *Oratio* VI, col. 754. Proclus alludes here to Exodus 37:1; elsewhere he aligns the Ark of the Covenant dwelling three months (2 Kings 6) with Mary's remaining three months with Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–56) in the Visitation. See *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5, Texts and Translations*, ed. Nicholas Constas (Leiden, 2003), 263 and n. 55, 272. I thank Joan Branham for bringing this reference to my attention.

56 Katzenellenbogen, *Sculptural Programs of Chartres* (note 36 above), 61 and fig. 48.

57 "E este tesoro estudo [sic] encerrado en el arca de la Virgin santa María nueve meses e bien guardado. Éste la pintó de dentro e de fuera de oro puro, que es pintada de todas virtudes; e llena de dentro e de fuera de la gracia de Dios"; Pedro M. Cátedra, *Los sermones en romance del manuscrito 40 (siglo XV) de la Real Colegiata de San Isidro de León: Edición y estudio* (Salamanca, 2002), serm. 8, 153–58. The style, choice of texts, minor errors in Latin, and inexact Bible quotations lead Cátedra to conclude that the author was most likely an itinerant Castilian preacher of limited schooling and unattached to any particular order; Cátedra, 157.

58 See note 12 above.

59 "Bona porta Maria, quae clausa erat, et non aperiebatur"; Ambrose of Milan (ca. 340–97), *De institutione Virginis* 8.53; PL 16, col. 320A. Ambrose paraphrases Ezekiel 44:2: "Porta haec clausa erit et non aperietur et vir non transiet per eam" (This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter in by it). On Ezekiel, see Glass, "Otage de l'historiographie" (note 47 above).

60 "She is the sealed fountain, never drying, / The walled garden, fructifying / By the good seed in it sown. / She is that close-fastened portal, / Shut by God against every mortal / For some secret cause unknown"; Adam of St. Victor (ca. 1110–46), "Lux advenit veneranda," *Sequentia* XIX, *In Purificatione Beatae Mariae*, PL 196, cols. 1482B–1483A, lines 25–30; translation (with Latin original) in *The Liturgical Poetry of Adam of St. Victor*, ed. and trans. Digby S. Wrangham (London, 1881), vol. 2, 226–33, no. 74, lines 33–38.

61 See note 25 above.

62 "When it was thus opened, it was not a *Vierge*, but a world—and more than a world, as paradise, purgatory, and hell were there with all the mysteries of the Old and New Testament, from the creation of the universe through the Last Judgment, and all represented in figures no larger than a finger, arranged on shelves in separate groups, all very well done and the most delightful thing in this world." Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, Ms. 3369 (formerly Ms. 2983A), 17th relation, 250ff., transcribed in Joseph Depoin, "La Vierge ouvrante de Maubuisson: Notice historique," *Mémoires de la Société historique et archéologique de l'arrondissement de Pointoise et du Vexin* 4 (1883), 17. See also Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 221–23, cat. no. 5, with photographs (figs. 10–12) of the changed interior postdating Sœur Candide's description.

63 Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 245–51, cat. no. 11. The misidentified scene, situated at the bottom of the central section below the Last Supper, portrays instead a prone figure of the Magdalene cradling an ointment jar. The acknowledged ca. 1836 ivory forgery belonging to the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen does depict a vignette of

Jonah and the whale in the niche beneath Christ's entombment, the location where the Paris forgery depicts a wolf and the Lyon forgery a pelican; Radler, 211–20, cat. nos. 2–4.

64 Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 224–28, 239–51, and 277–83, cat. nos. 6, 9–11, and 17. Neither limbo/hell nor the Last Judgment is depicted in the three acknowledged French ivory forgeries (Louvre, Rouen, Lyon) or the disputed French ivory work in the Walters Art Museum (Baltimore); Radler, 203–20, cat. nos. 1–4.

65 See note 24 above regarding the Morlaix Virgin's rare combination of a sculpted central Trinity flanked by six painted scenes, here both joyful (left) and sorrowful (right) scenes. See also Gertsman, "Performing Birth, Enacting Death" (note 5 above), for an analysis of performative aspects in this sculpture.

66 Sœur Candide's manuscript was approved by Mères Angélique (Angélique Arnauld) and Marie des Anges (Marie Suireau). The former was abbess from 1618 to 1622, and the latter from 1626 to 1648: Adolphe Dutilleux and Joseph Depoin, *L'abbaye de Maubuisson (Notre-Dame-la-Royale): Histoire et cartulaire, publiés d'après des documents entièrement inédits*, vol. 1, *Histoire de l'abbaye et des abbesses (1236–1789)* (Pontoise, 1882), 78. Depoin describes Sœur Candide as the confidant of Mère des Anges, the reformist abbess: Depoin, "Vierge ouvrante de Maubuisson" (note 62 above), 16.

67 Sœur Candide reports that the Maubuisson *Vierge ouvrante* was commissioned by an abbess in the fifteenth century for private devotion: Depoin, "Vierge ouvrante de Maubuisson" (note 62 above), 21. It is first mentioned in a document of 1517: Dutilleux and Depoin, *L'abbaye de Maubuisson* (note 66 above), vol. 2, 100. Locals traditionally credited the foundress, Blanche of Castile, with the donation of the abbey's medieval art: Depoin, 14–15 and 21. Despite evidence to the contrary, this fanciful tale persists in the literature: Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (Paris, 1957), 92–93. Vloberg, who was able to see the sculpture before its theft in 1973, considered it early-fifteenth-century: Vloberg, "Vierges ouvrantes" (note 5 above), 26 and 32. Patrimoine de France catalogues it as fourteenth-century: Monuments historiques, dossier PM95000639, 1994, www.patrimoine-de-france.org/oeuvres/richesses-50-14643-105657-P278496-258740.html. Others report a thirteenth-century date: Sarrète, *Vierges ouvertes* (note 5 above), 53–57; Fries, "Die Schreinmadonna" (note 5 above), 33–34; Schmid, "Die Schreinmadonna von Cheyres" (note 5 above), 156; Baumer, "Die Schreinmadonna" (note 5 above), 248–50; Radler, *Schreinmadonna* (note 5 above), 221–23; Wolf, *Deutsche Schnitzretabel* (note 34 above), 299. The adherence of influential scholars to the unduly early date can be attributed in part to a general inattention to narrative *Vierges ouvrantes*. This has led nonspecialists like Didi-Huberman and Wolf, among others, to mar otherwise probing texts with errors regarding the supposedly simultaneous emergence of Passion and Infancy cycles as narrative motifs, the relation of painting to carving in *Gnadenstuhl* interiors (see note 24 above), and the presumed demise of narrative interiors in favor of Trinity motifs: Wolf, 298–99; Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'image ouverte: Motifs de l'incarnation dans les arts visuels* (Paris, 2007), 44–45.

68 Jan Assmann applies the term "cultural memory" to the institutionalization of invisible religion, i.e., the handing down of a symbolic world view: Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, 2006), 37–38. His thoughts on the generation and transmission of religious memory through rites and "cultural activities" are of value to medievalists who, faced with a dearth of contemporary documentation, endeavor to assess the vestiges of earlier rituals in modern devotional practices. I thank Nino Zchomelidse for bringing this work to my attention.

69 For location details, see Radler's catalogue (*Schreinmadonna* [note 5 above], 197–360) and my enlarged and amended checklist (note 9 above).

70 See note 44 above.

71 *A Description or Breife Declaration of All the Ancient Monuments, Rites, and Customes Belonginge or Beinge within the Monastical Church of Durham before the Suppression* (1593), ed. James Raine, Surtees Society 15 (London, 1842), 26.

72 Rites of Durham (note 71 above), 26. Significantly, this reference comes not from the detailed account of the Easter Triduum, where the burial ceremony is described at length (11–12), but from a later section describing individual altars and their decoration.

73 See Pamela Sheingorn, *The Easter Sepulchre in England* (Kalamazoo, 1987).

74 The Rites of Durham passage has been frequently cited from E. K. Chambers's *The Mediaeval Stage* (Oxford, 1903), vol. 2, 311ff., most notably by Camille and Gell: Camille, *Gothic Idol* (note 3 above), 230–31; Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford, 1998), 141. For Radler's discussion (note 5 above), see 131, and notes 659–60, 175–76.

75 The practice, believed to date from the early Middle Ages, is described by Durandus (ca. 1230–96): *The Rationale Divinorum Officiorum of William Durand of Mende: A New Translation of the Prologue and Book One*, trans. Timothy M.

Thibodeau (New York, 2007), 42–45. On the medieval English version of the ceremony, which incorporated an extended *adoratio* known as the "Creeping of the Cross," see Daniel Rock, *The Church of Our Fathers as Seen in St. Osmund's Rite for the Cathedral of Salisbury* (London, 1905), vol. 4, 99–106, 278–80.

76 See note 71 above.

77 Depoin, "Vierge ouvrante de Maubuisson" (note 62 above), 19–20; Dutilleux and Depoin, *L'abbaye de Maubuisson* (note 66 above), vol. 2, 102.

78 Paul-François Pihan de la Forest (1739–1810), "Histoire de Maubuisson," undated manuscript, Bibliothèque Municipale de Pontoise, 69; quoted in Dutilleux and Depoin, *L'abbaye de Maubuisson* (note 66 above), vol. 2, 102.

79 Denis Grivot, *La statuaire en bois dans les collections du Musée Rolin*, exh. cat. (Autun, 1982), 18.

80 Oral communication, María Ángeles Pérez and the patrons of Bar "El Joyancon," Pie de Concha (Cantabria), Spain, 27 April 2007. For reasons of security, the figure was recently moved from the small hermitage to the parish church. See also note 68 above regarding cultural memory, to whose parameters I would add the factor of changing perceptions of ritual from largely religious to primarily secular societies.

81 On the use of conventional cult images in religious processions, see Kathleen Ashley, "The Moving Subjects of Processional Performances," in *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam, 2001), 7–34.

82 As Michael Camille noted, "[w]hat is startling about the development of Marian imagery in this period is that movement and action are rituals performed not just by priests but, in the minds of those who worshiped them, by images themselves": Camille, *Gothic Idol* (note 3 above), 232.

83 See notes 8, 11, and 41 above.

84 Gell, *Art and Agency* (note 74 above), esp. chap. 7.

85 Miri Rubin and Suzannah Biernoff argue for a visual emphasis on the consecration in the post-Lateran period, though Thomas Lentes dissents: Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), esp. 147–55; Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2002), esp. 133–64; Thomas Lentes, "'As far as the eye can see. . .': Rituals of Gazing in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton, 2006), 360–73.